

# Lonaconing Residency, Iron Technology & the Railroad

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## Introduction

In the early 19th century, a 14-foot thick seam of bituminous coal referred to historically as "The Big Vein" was discovered in the Georges Creek Valley in Western Maryland. This coal region would become famous for its clean-burning low sulfur content that made it ideal for powering ocean steamers, river boats, locomotives, and steam mills, and machines shops. By 1850, almost 30 coal companies were mining the Georges Creek Coal, producing over 60 million tons of coal between 1854 to 1891, with 5,000 men working underground. In the census of 1860, over 90% of the miners could read and write.

The Town of Lonaconing was located centrally in the Georges Creek Valley, between Frostburg at the north, and Westernport at the south. Both towns at the extremes had rail junctions. There were plans to extend the canal through Westernport. Lonaconing became the largest among the dozen or so towns along the Georges Creek, serving as a manufacturing center, a home for companies and miners, and a major retail center. Today Lonaconing is a town of some 1,200, still the largest among the Georges Creek communities.

Lonaconing is the home of the Georges Creek Library, a branch of the Allegany County Library system. The building was built to look like an Iron furnace. Lonaconing has a World War I memorial in the center of Town.

Dan's Mountain State Park is accessed by Water Station Road, from Route 36 in Lonaconing. It covers 480 acres, and is managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. It is a day-use park, and has remained mostly undeveloped, except for an Olympic-sized swimming facility. Numerous rustic picnic pavilions are available, as is a fishing pond. The Dan's Mountain Wildlife Management area covers over 9,500 acres.

Arguably, the most famous native of Lonaconing is baseball player Lefty Grove. He was born in 1900, and went on to a Major League career with Philadelphia and Boston, winning 300 games. He was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. He is buried in Frostburg, Md.

The Georges Creek region supplied many men to the Armed Forces, from the earliest days of the Revolution to the current ongoing conflicts. There is a memorial to the World War – I veterans in Lonaconing, opposite the library.

The author's direct ancestors settled in Lonaconing during the Civil War. He has an active interest in the history and technology of the Iron Furnace.

## The Companies

### **Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company**

The Georges Creek Coal & Iron (GCC&I) Company was formed in 1835, and chartered in the State of Maryland on March 29, 1836. The president was John Henry Alexander, who also happened to be the Maryland State Engineer. Also associated with the company was Philip C. Tyson. Between 1837 and 1839, the company built an iron furnace at Lonaconing. The furnace, fueled by coke, went into blast in 1839. The company had leased the furnace to Detmold, but then took it back. After that, Georges Creek Coal & Iron operated it sporadically. The furnace produced 1,860 tons of pig iron in its last active year, 1855. It was then shut down, and abandoned. The railroad portion was sold to the C&P in 1863. In 1910, it became the Georges Creek Coal Company, and operates to this day.

### **Georges Creek Rail Road**

The Georges Creek Rail Road was never chartered as a separate business entity, but was always a part of Georges Creek Coal & Iron. In September of 1851, railroad construction began up the Georges Creek from Westernport, where the B&O had reached Piedmont across the Potomac in Virginia. The railroad was opened on May 9, 1853. The Maryland State Legislature authorized the GCC&I to allow pedestrian, livestock, and wagon traffic over their bridge, and to collect tolls. Five cents per person, five cents per cow, three cents per smaller livestock, and ten cents per wheel. The tolls could only be collected from a user once per day for use of the bridge.

In June 1853, a total of 1,061 tons of coal were shipped. In all of 1855, 225,000 tons of coal were shipped, sometimes in 102 car trains. Iron ore or cast iron did not figure into the shipments. In 1856, the line was extended from Lonaconing northward to connect with the C&P from Frostburg. The Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company's 9.2 mile railroad was acquired by the C&P on October 23, 1863. The shops and engine house at Lonaconing were used until 1867

### **Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad Co.**

March 13, 1850, marked the date of incorporation of the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad (C&P) Company, as approved by the legislature of the State of Maryland. In 1887, the C&P filed a charter in the State of West Virginia. The Commissioners of the company in Maryland were Robert Garrett, John Q. Hewlett, P.H. Sullivan, all of Baltimore, William Price and George A. Thruston, lawyers of Cumberland, and Andrew Stewart and Edward D. Gayzan of Pennsylvania.

“That the President and Directors of said Company shall be, and they are hereby invested with all the rights and powers necessary to the construction and repair of a Railroad from the town of Cumberland, to some suitable point on the dividing line between the States of

Maryland and Pennsylvania, to be by them determined, not exceeding sixty feet wide, with as many sets of tracks as the said President and Directors, or a majority of them, may necessary, and they, or a majority of them may cause to be made, or contract with others for making said Railroad, or any part of it, and they, their agents, or those with whom they may contract for making any part of the same, or their agents, may enter upon, and use and excavate, all lands which may be wanted for the site of said road, or the erection of warehouses or other works necessary to said road, or for any other purpose necessary or useful in the construction or repair of said road or its works, and that they may build bridges, may fix scales and weights, may lay rails, may take and use any earth, timber, gravel, stone or other materials which may be wanted for the construction or repair of any part of said road, or any of its works, and may make and construct all works whatsoever which may be necessary and expedient, in order to the proper completion of said road, and that they, or a majority of them, may make or cause to be made, lateral Railroads in any direction whatsoever, in connecting said Railroad from the town of Cumberland to the dividing line between the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and in the construction of the same or their works, shall have, possess, and may exercise all the rights and powers hereby given to them, in order to the construction or repair of the said Railroad, from the town of Cumberland to the dividing line between the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania.”

The transportation rates were spelled out and fixed:

“..and they shall have power to charge for toll upon (and the transportation of persons) goods, produce, merchandise, or property of any kind whatsoever, transported by them along said railroad, from the town of Cumberland to the dividing line between the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania, any sum not exceeding the following rates, namely on all goods, produce, merchandise or property of any description whatsoever transported by them, not exceeding three cents a ton per mile for tolls, and three cents a ton per mile for transportation, and for the transportation of passengers, not exceeding three cents per mile for each passenger; and it shall not be lawful for any other company, or any person or persons whatsoever, to travel upon or use any of the roads of said company, or to transport persons, merchandise, produce or property of any description whatsoever, along said roads or any of them, without the license or permission of the President and Directors of said company”

Later, four more commissioners, all from Baltimore, were named: James M. Buchanan, Elijah M. Bartholow, David Stewart and Charles R. Clark.

In February 1866, it was added:

“And be it further enacted, That the President and Directors of said company shall be, and they are hereby invested with full right and power to connect with any existing railroad leading from the town of Cumberland at any point west of Cumberland, and to construct a railroad from the place of such connection to the Pennsylvania line, or to purchase any such railroad, or any part thereof, and the lands, franchises and appurtenances held for the purpose of the same, with power to construct and build a connection from any railroad, or part of any railroad so purchased, from any point

thereof, west of Cumberland, the said President and Directors may choose, to the Pennsylvania line.”

And, in fact, they had to.

“And be it further enacted, That in case said President and Directors shall purchase any existing railroad, or part of such road as aforesaid, or in case they shall make any connection With any existing railroad, and construct such connection to the Pennsylvania line as aforesaid, then so much of said Act, being the twentieth section thereof, as declares such charter forfeited, in case the road provided for in the twelfth section thereof is not commenced in six years after the passage of said Act, and shall not be completed in twelve years from the commencement thereof, shall be inoperative and void.”

But this was subsequently repealed:

“And it be enacted, That the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad Company, be, and it is hereby wholly relieved from any obligation to construct a railroad to the Pennsylvania line, acid that the twentieth section of said original act imposing a forfeiture in relation thereto, be and the same is hereby repealed.”

And they didn’t necessarily have first choice:

“Provided, that the Pittsburgh and Connellsburg Rail Road Company, as proposed to be chartered, by a bill now pending, in the laying out and constructing their road from the town of Cumberland to the Pennsylvania line, shall have priority of choice over any road to be laid out or constructed by the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Rail Road Company in the right of way.”

By construction and acquisition, the Cumberland & Pennsylvania built itself into a formidable position, as noted by the Assembly in 1906:

“Whereas, The tracks of the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad Company now extend from Cumberland, in Allegany county, Maryland, to Piedmont, in the State of West Virginia, running through the entire coal basin of said Allegany county, and to a very large extent controlling the entire output of coal in this State.”

The Assembly also noted:

“It is now apparent that the extensive corporate rights and franchises granted by this State to the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad Company are not now being used and exercised for the purpose intended by the State, but on the other hand are being used to the detriment of the material interests of the State and in such a way as to promote the development of coal fields in the State of Pennsylvania and West Virginia to the disadvantage of the State of Maryland.”

In a period of consolidation following the Civil War, the Cumberland & Pennsylvania absorbed all of the pioneer mining railroad in Allegany County, including the Georges

Creek Rail Road. It had competition in Lonaconing later, when the rival Georges Creek & Cumberland Railway was built. And if that were not enough track squeezed into the valley, a trolley system also linked Lonaconing and the other towns with Frostburg, Cumberland, and Westernport.

### **Consolidation Coal**

The Consolidation Coal Company was established in 1864 and headquartered in Cumberland, Maryland, for the first 85 years (1864-1945). During this time, the company became the largest bituminous coal company in the eastern United States. The company's origin began in the early 19th century when a 14-foot thick seam of bituminous coal referred to historically as "The Big Vein" was discovered in the Georges Creek Valley of Western Maryland. This coal region became famous during the industrial age for its clean-burning low sulfur content that made it ideal for powering ocean steamers, river boats, locomotives, and steam mills, and machines shops. However, coal production did not become important until the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad reached Cumberland in 1842. In 1850, the opening of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal from Cumberland to Washington, D.C. provided another route for coal shipments. Over 21 million short tons of coal were transported on the canal before it closed in 1923. By 1850, almost 30 coal companies were mining the Georges Creek Valley, producing over 60 million tons of coal between 1854 to 1891. The Consolidated Coal Company was formed as a consolidation of the many coal mine and railroad companies of Western Maryland founded during the rush years. The Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad was owned by the Consolidation Coal Company.

The Western Maryland region's coal production rose about 1 million short tons in 1865, exceeded 4 million short tons by the turn of the century, and reached an all time high of about 6 million short tons in 1907. A small amount of the coal production in the early 1900s was premium blacksmithing coal that was specially processed and delivered in boxcars to customers throughout the United States and Canada.

Sharp declines in coal demand after 1920, reflecting downturns in the economy, recurrent labor problems and the extensive replacement of coal by petroleum, led to further consolidations and mergers in the coal industry. In 1945, Consolidated Coal Company merged with the Pittsburgh Coal Company, and the corporate headquarters was moved from Cumberland to Pittsburgh. In 1966 the Continental Oil Company (Conoco) purchased the assets of Consolidation Coal Company, and in 1981 DuPont purchased Conoco. The Consolidation Coal Company continued to exist as a subsidiary of Dupont until 1998 when the subsidiary was purchased from Dupont by Rheinbraun. As of 1999 the company has renamed itself Consol Energy, reflecting the diversification of the business into other forms of energy. It is still in operation as of this writing.

### **The trolley: Cumberland & Westernport Electric Railway**

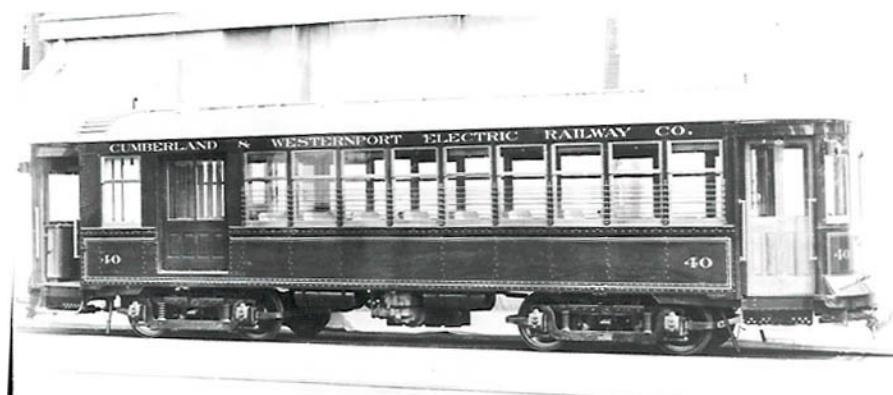
In the 1890's, interest began to form in a trolley system to service the Georges Creek area. In 1893, the Lonaconing and Cumberland Electric Railway was incorporated. This

was followed by the incorporation of the Frostburg, Eckhart, and Cumberland, the Lonaconing, Midland, and Frostburg, and the Westernport & Lonaconing by 1901.

In 1901, work started from Frostburg towards Cumberland. By 1902, the line stretched from Frostburg down the Georges Creek to Lonaconing. The first passenger run was made on April 24, 1902. At Cumberland, an interchange was made with the Cumberland Electric Railway, a local city service. There was a ticket office and terminus at Baltimore and Centre Streets. Hourly service was provided. The Cumberland and Westernport Electric Railway was formed by merger in 1906. An extension of the system to Salisbury, Pa., and to Keyser WV were considered, but never built. Miners specials ran down the Georges Creek, to provide transportation for the different shifts.

The trolleys also carried the mail and parcels over their 27 miles of standard gauge track. The growth of freight and express service lead to the use of a freight-only trolley, making two trips per day.

Mostly Brill equipment was used, with some Southern cars being acquired later in the operation. There was a coal burning 500 kilowatt power station and a car barn at Clarysville, serviced by the C&P. There was an auxiliary 400 kilowatt power station at Reynolds.



By 1924, the private automobile was making inroads on ridership of the traction line. The operation was sold to Cities Service, who replaced the trolleys with buses and freight trucks by 1925. This scenario was repeated countless times across the United States, as the General Motors-backed Cities Service phased out electric trolleys in favor of diesel trucks and buses.

The C&WE was not to be outdone in computational capability. The Cumberland times mentions on March 6, 1916, "An ingenious machine – The Cumberland & Westernport Electric Railroad has just installed in their office a very ingenious machine that adds, subtracts, multiplies, and divides, works proportion, cube root, and shows the positions of the decimal."

Rail Service was discontinued between Frostburg and Westernport on July 22, 1925, and between Frostburg and Cumberland on August 4, 1926. The right-of-way and equipment was transferred to the Cumberland & Westernport Transit Company, which held the right-of-way until 1943. The company was dissolved in 1955.

### **Georges Creek & Cumberland Railway**

The Georges Creek & Cumberland (GC&C) Railroad was the child of two mining companies, the Maryland Coal Company, and the American Coal Company.

The Maryland Coal Company was formed in 1870, as a result of Maryland Legislature action to change the name of the Mutual Coal company, chartered in 1868. An Act of the Legislature in 1878 enlarged the powers granted to the company to engage in the transportation business as well. The American Coal Company was chartered in 1852, and similarly had its charter amended in 1878 to allow it to engage in the railroad business. They were authorized to construct a railroad from their mines to the C&O Canal, or the B&O Railroad.

The Maryland Coal company had mines on the west rise of the Big Vein, near Lonaconing. Their Kingsland mine operated with 104 men in 1907, delivering 900 tons per day. It used a 42-inch gauge, 2,000 foot long tram road from the mine to a tipple on the GC&C. Their Appleton mine used the same tipple. The tipple loaded coal into the coal hoppers, and had a facility for loading the locomotive tender as well. The tram road operated with a 10-ton locomotive.

Maryland Coal also operated the Tyson and New Detmold mines with 52 men producing 1000 tons per day in 1907. Here, they utilized a fireless haulage locomotive, which was charged with steam at a central plant near the mine mouth. The 42-inch mine track was operated with 1,600 pound mine cars that had a 5,000 pound capacity.

American Coal Company's Jackson Mine at Pekin, and Caledonia Mine at Barton, worked the Big Vein. From the mine mouth, a 22-ton locomotive transported the coal cars over a one mile long tram road to a tipple.

In the Georges Creek Coal Region of Allegany County in the 1870's, the transportation monopoly was controlled by the Cumberland & Pennsylvania (C&P) Railroad, which was owned by the Consolidation Coal Company. Rival companies could not get competitive rates to move their coal from the mines to the B&O and the canal. The solution was seen as two-fold: build a second railroad, and involve the B&O's rival, the Pennsylvania Railroad. The GC&C should not be confused with the earlier Georges Creek Rail Road, built in 1853 to allow shipment of iron products from the furnace at Lonaconing to the planned canal and railroad terminus at Westernport.

The GC&C was born out of controversy and competition with the C&P, and this climate of anti-cooperation continued. The GC&C had to fight its way past the C&P into

Cumberland, and then fight for the right to reach the canal over B&O trackage. The first fight was at the west end of Cumberland, an area known as City Junction. The GC&C had to cross the C&P's Potomac Wharf Branch, which was there first. The Pennsylvania Railroad in Maryland line had been built from the Pennsylvania state line to the west side of the Narrows. It was their intent to continue down the north side of the Narrows, along with the C&P and B&O mains, to Cumberland. The C&P persuaded the other road to bridge Will's Creek, and continue down the south side of the Narrows, then cross the C&P's Potomac Wharf Branch at City Junction. When the line was built to City Junction, the C&P changed its mind. It kept an engine parked at the intended crossing point, blocking construction. When the engine was a bit late getting back into position one day, the GC&C trackmen forced the crossing. The C&P trackmen tore it out. Tempers flared. The C&P raised its trackbed, making crossing impossible. The final issues were decided in court, in favor of allowing the GC&C crossing with due compensation. Then, the B&O did not want to grant the GC&C trackage rights to reach the canal terminus, and that issue also had to be resolved in court.

The Western Maryland Railroad purchased the controlling stock interests of the GC&C on January 17, 1907. The GC&C was a small but key part of the Gould master plan for a transcontinental railroad link. The financial panic of 1907 put an end to these grand schemes. Bankruptcy followed. Operation of the GC&C was taken over by the newly reorganized Western Maryland Railway in July of 1913. A full merger and consolidation took place on January 23, 1917. The line was operated until 1939, when the Western Maryland abandoned the track from Georges Creek Junction to Midland. Mines west of Midland were then served through an interchange with the C&P at Jackson Junction, north of Lonaconing.

From 1869 to 1879, James A. Millholland, son of the James who set up the C&P shops, was the second vice-president of the C&P. He was lured away to become General Manager, later President, of the Georges Creek and Cumberland Railroad. Part of the deal was his new house, located behind the Emmanuel Episcopal Church on Washington Street in Cumberland.

The GC&C started as two separate pieces, the line to Vale Summit and Lonaconing called the GC&C, and the connection to Pennsylvania, called the *Pennsylvania Railroad in Maryland*. These were merged under the name Georges Creek and Cumberland. Later, the Connellsville Extension of the Western Maryland Railroad was built under the umbrella of the GC&C. On July 1, 1913, the GC&C was formally absorbed into the Western Maryland system, and the Connellsville extension became WM trackage, as did the Pennsylvania Railroad in Maryland. This ended the hope of extending the original Georges Creek & Cumberland line.

### **Lonaconing Ocean Coal Mining and Transportation Company**

The company was authorized in 1853 by the Maryland State Legislature. It was formed by William H. Aspinwall, Edward Cunard, Auguste Belmont, Joseph B. Varnum, Jonathan Meredith, Edward J. Woolsey, and James L. Graham. They were authorized to

mine coal, and to build railroads as needed in Allegany County, or purchase or lease them. They could own and operate steam or sailing vessels. They could condemn land they needed for the railroad projects. They were authorized to collect transportation tolls of three cents per ton-mile on merchandise, and two cents per mile for passengers.

If you wanted to set up a mining and transportation company in 1853, it would be hard to pull together a better set of directors:

William Henry Aspinwall (December 16, 1807 – January 18, 1875) was an American businessman. In 1832, he became president of the "Howland & Aspinwall" merchant firm, which had been founded by his cousin and expanded trade to South America, China, Europe, the Mediterranean, and the East and West Indies. In 1848 he founded the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. He then promoted the Panama Railroad across the Isthmus of Panama. He retired in 1856 but remained active as a philanthropist. He was a founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals - SPCA (in 1866) and of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1869).

Edward Cunard, son of Sir Samuel Cunard of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Sir Samuel founded the Cunard Line, a British shipping Company, which still operates with a Headquarters in London.

August Belmont, Sr. (December 8, 1813 - November 24, 1890), was born in Alzey, Hesse, to a Jewish family. He immigrated to New York City in 1837 after becoming the American representative of the Rothschild family's banking house in Frankfurt.

He founded August Belmont & Company, believing that he could replace the defunct American Agency with his company. It was an instant success, and Belmont was able to straighten out the Rothschild interests in the United States between 1837 and 1842. On receiving his American citizenship, he married Caroline Slidell Perry, daughter of Commodore Matthew Perry.

Joseph B. Varnum was associated with the Mt. Savage Iron Company, and the railroads.

Jonathan Meredith b. 1784-, was a commercial lawyer in Baltimore; council for the Bank of the United States and the Bank of Baltimore. Had the acquaintance of every President from Washington to Grant.

Edward J. Woolsey, of Woolsey Mansion, Astoria, Long Island (blt 1726).was a Director of the Delaware & Hudson Canal and Railroad Co., 1860.

James Lorimer Graham (1804-1882) was an American lawyer specializing in real estate. He was president of the Metropolitan Insurance Company in New York City. The Lonaconing Ocean Coal Mining and Transportation Company changed its name, with the concurrence of the Maryland State Legislature, to the Ocean Steam Coal Company in 1872.

## The People

### **Christian Edward Detmold, (2/2/1810-7/2/1887)**

Detmold was a major figure in the Lonaconing Iron Furnace. A civil engineer by training, born in Hanover, Germany, Detmold had entered the U.S. at age 16, en route to Brazil to join the Army, but decided to stay instead. He did surveys for a railroad in Charleston, S.C., won a \$500. prize for a horse treadmill car from the Charleston & Hamburg Railroad & Canal Co., and worked for the U.S. War Department on the construction of Fort Sumpter.

From 1845 to 1852, Detmold was involved in iron production at Lonaconing. He was responsible for the construction of the tram road in 1847 from Lonaconing to Clarysville. (Sometimes referred to as the Detmold Tramway, or Detmold Railroad). This line connected with the Eckhart Branch Railroad, constructed by the Maryland Mining Company. Detmold leased the furnace, overhauled the boilers, and rebuilt the engine house. The furnace went back into blast in May 1846, and Detmold had a flourishing business by 1847. He was producing 2,500 tons of pig iron annually. The Georges Creek company, perhaps jealous of his success, declined to renew his lease. He moved on to direct construction of the Exhibit of Industry, at the Crystal Palace in New York which opened in July 1853. He held several patents including one dated 1858, when he was living in New Jersey for a “mode of securing the ends of railway bars.” His 1843 patent, modified and reissued in 1845 (when he was living in New York) was for a reheating process to take cast iron the next step. C. E. Detmold is remembered by having both a town, and a C&P engine named after him.

### **James Millholland**

James A. Millholland was as a railroad executive, serving as General Manager and later President of the George's Creek and Cumberland Railroad in Cumberland, Maryland. His father, James Millholland Senior (1812-1875) was born in Baltimore. He was a railway master mechanic and particularly well known for his invention of many railway mechanisms. His association with the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company as master mechanist spanned fifty years in the early development of the American railroad. The senior Millholland's inventions and contributions include the cast-iron crank axle, wooden spring, plate girder bridge, poppet throttle, anthracite firebox, water grate, drop frame, and steel tires. He was also an early user and advocate of the superheater, the feed-water heater, and the injector. Several of his innovations were adopted as standard practice by the railroad industry.

### **Lonacona**

Lonacona, or George Washington Cresap, was the son of Nemacolin, a famous Delaware Chief.

After his father Checkoconnicon became old, Nemacolin became chief of 160 warriors and he moved his tribe from Uniontown area to Fort Redstone, PA (now known as Brownsville). During this time the Virginia Government asked Thomas Cresap to blaze a trail through the mountains from Cumberland to Fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh, PA). This was to help the westward movement of the Ohio Company to the Ohio River and the State of Ohio for development of white communities. In 1751 Thomas Cresap asked his friend Nemacolin to help him in blazing this trail because he knew that Nemacolin would know the easiest way over the mountains,

Nemacolin and his sons, Lonacona and William proceeded to Oldtown, MD, to help Cresap map out the old Indian trail leading to Ft. Redstone, PA. on the Monongahela River. This trail became known as Nemacolin's Path and then the National Road (Rt. 40) in 1806. When Thomas had successfully mapped out the trail, he left Nemacolin in Ft. Redstone to travel back to his home in Oldtown, MD. Nemacolin's son Lonacona (born before 1738 in Ft. Redstone) asked permission from his father to return to Maryland, as he had become good friends with Daniel Cresap, Thomas' oldest son, and wished to live near him in Rawlings, MD. Nemacolin gave his permission, and Lonacona took his Delaware wife and family back with Daniel. Thomas Cresap had named Lonacona, George Washington Cresap to protect him from white violence.

The town of Lonaconing was named for Lonacona. Georges Creek was also named for him. Lonacona died around 1790 in the home of his friend Dan, and he is buried in the Cresap Cemetery in Rawlings, MD. Lonacona's daughter Teresa married William Workman of Mt. Savage, MD. Later, William moved his family to Kerens, WV. (From the article "Chief Nemacolin--A Delaware Indian Headman" by Alma Irene King-Finney.)

### **Duncan Sloan**

The idea for a silk mill in Lonaconing, Maryland, began on a train's smoking car in the early 1900s. Mr. Duncan Sloan, local banker, became a salesman for his hometown when he overheard that the Klots Throwing Company was looking for a suitable site for a new plant. Mr. Sloan emphasized the availability of surplus labor and cheap fuel in the region. The coal industry that the region depended upon, was notorious for layoffs due to periods of slackening demand, so the mill would supplement wages and provide for more steady employment. He also stressed Lonaconing's access to rail transportation in an effort to persuade the representative that his town would be the ideal location for a new mill. Five weeks after the smoking car meeting, Mr. George Klots, and Mr. J. H. Britton, representing the company, proposed erecting Klots Throwing Mill Company in Lonaconing. A dialog between the New York-based company and the town began. Shortly after the proposal was made, a public meeting occurred at the Evans Opera House in Lonaconing. The town citizens decided to accept the offer made by Mr. Klots and Mr. Britton. At the meeting, the decision was made to establish a committee of seven businessmen to seek bonds that were to be made payable to the Lonaconing Savings Bank. Proceeds from the bond issue would finance construction costs. The total cost for building and equipping the mill was estimated to be about \$100,000. The town and the

committee were able to furnish at least \$47,000 of the \$100,000. A piece of land, 250' by 400', was purchased along Railroad Street to be the home of the new facility. Ground was broken by the S.W. Wise Construction Company of Cumberland on August 13, 1905.

## Industry

### The Iron Furnace

The Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company was formed in 1835, and chartered in the State of Maryland on March 29, 1836. The president was John Henry Alexander, who also happened to be the Maryland State Engineer. Between 1837 and 1839, the company built an iron furnace at Lonaconing. The furnace, fueled by coke, went into blast in 1839. There was plenty of iron ore, limestone, water, and coal locally, but the major problem the company faced was transporting finished products to market. Production reached 75 tons per week, and local iron needs were quickly satisfied. Some products were shipped out by wagon, including such items as dowels for the C&O Canal walls. The adjacent casting house made farming implements, mine car wheels and track, and household utensils. The furnace output was in the form of cast pig iron, which was sold to be recast, or worked.

Ore for the furnace came from mines on the hill behind the furnace. Tram roads were used to transport the ore to the furnace. Later, the mine tunnels were used as storage cellars by residents on the hill. Ore was also mined on the opposite hillside, above the (later) silk factory, and the area around Buck Hill. Ore also came from Koontz. The *Tilley Field* was on Hugh Weir's property, on the east side of a fork of Laurel Run. Another tunnel was located on the Philip Hansel land, just south of Tilley Field. It was reported to be 6 feet high, and a 100 feet long. From 1848 through 1858, ore came from the area around Pompey Smash (Vale Summit), on the south side of Dan's Rock Road.

One key ingredient of a blast furnace is the blast. The company bought the necessary machinery from the West Point Foundry in New York City. The machinery went by ship from New York to Georgetown, then by canal to Williamsport. Here, the parts were loaded on wagons for the final leg of the journey. The canal charged \$3.50 per ton to transport the twenty tons of machinery parts. Only the boilers made it to Lonaconing before the canal froze in the winter of 1837. Ten additional wagon loads from Williamsport arrived at the site in November.

The blast machinery featured a 60-horsepower steam engine fed by five boilers. The steam cylinders were 18" in diameter, and 8 feet long. The system operated at a pressure of 50 pounds per square inch (psi). The steam cylinder drove a blast cylinder 5 feet in diameter, and 8 feet long. This forced about 3500 cubic feet per minute of air at 2.5 psi through the system. A very large iron regulator smoothed the air flow from the reciprocating cylinder. The air flowed through a series of pipes in the boiler furnaces and was heated to 700 degrees F. The heated air then entered the blast furnace through two big water cooled nozzles called *tuyeres*. When the water supply failed, the furnace had to be operated with a less efficient cold blast. The first run of good iron came from the furnace on May 17, 1839. By May 23, the furnace was producing six tons per day. Seven tons of coal were required to produce one ton of the cast metal.

With production going well, iron piled up in Lonaconing. In 1842, sales of pig iron to foundries in Cumberland were begun, with delivery by wagon. An adjacent sawmill and lumberyard, also owned by the company, recorded sales to the Mount Savage Iron Works, then involved in building their own furnaces. In the fall of 1842, pig iron was offered to the B&O railroad at a price of \$29. per ton, but delivery was still a problem. After experimenting with a horse powered tram road, the company realized that a rail line, built down the Georges Creek Valley toward the Potomac River at Westernport, would be the answer to the transportation issue. The rail line was finished from Lonaconing to Piedmont in 1853, where it connected with the recently arrived B&O Railroad. It was, unfortunately, too late to provide the needed market access for the Lonaconing Iron Furnace. The furnace in Lonaconing was abandoned in 1855, and the canal was never extended past Cumberland. Coal, not iron, became the most important commodity shipped out of the region on the railroad. The works employed 220 men.

After Detmold operated the furnace facility successfully for a few years, the Company took it back. After that, Georges Creek Coal & Iron operated it sporadically. The furnace produced 1,860 tons of pig iron in its last active year, 1855. It was then shut down, and abandoned. Harvey states that the furnace facility was too technologically advanced for its time. However, it provided an impetus for the mining industry and for the construction of the railroad, and served as a model for a similar iron working facility built at Mount Savage. There was technology sharing and cooperation between the facilities at Lonaconing and at Mount Savage. The Lonaconing facility produced wrought iron dowels and lock gate hinges for the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal construction.

The furnace complex at Lonaconing was visited by the Superintendent of Construction for the B&O, a Mr. Casper Wever, Esq., in June of 1839. Shortly afterwards, the shareholders of the C&O Canal visited. With the furnace up and operating, the facility expansion plans included a forge and rolling mill. However, these were never built. The company began to concentrate on the railroad to meet with the canal and the railroad at Westernport. By 1850, surveys were complete.

The furnace sat idle for many years. It was named to the National Register of Historic Places, and was rehabilitated and stabilized by the firm of Meyers and D'Aleo, Inc. of Baltimore.

### **The Georges Creek Railroad**

The B&O reached Piedmont, across the Potomac River from Westernport, in July of 1851. In September of that year, the railroad construction began up the Georges Creek. The railroad was opened on May 9, 1853. In June, a total of 1,061 tons of coal were shipped. In all of 1855, 225,000 tons of coal were shipped, sometimes in 102 car trains. Iron ore or cast iron did not figure into the shipments. In 1856, the line was extended from Lonaconing northward to connect with the C&P from Frostburg. The Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company's 9.2 mile railroad was acquired by the C&P on October 23, 1863. The shops and engine house at Lonaconing were used until 1867. These were located just north of where the road to Dan's Mountain State Park merges with State

Route 36, at Water Station Road, north of Lonaconing. Interestingly, this section of line still saw use in 1998 for on-demand coal service. In 1991, the Georges Creek subdivision of CSX hauled 195,197 tons of coal over this line, as compared with the 225,000 tons by the Georges Creek Rail Road in 1855. The line is still in place, but currently out of service.

Locomotive builders Baldwin and Smith & Perkins sold engines and rolling stock to the Georges Creek Company. Ross Winans of Baltimore sold wheels and axles to the GCC&I for mine cars. Passenger service was provided on the Georges Creek Railroad with their 2-6-0 engine. A list of motive power for the Georges Creek Rail Road has been compiled, but it is not known if this is a complete list. All of the listed engines were transferred to Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad ownership, as part of the buyout. No pictures of the 2-6-0 or 0-6-0 engines are known to exist. Locomotives were generally named after geographical references, or persons of significance. Mr. A. H. Stump was the President of the Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company in 1884. A.H. Stump & Sons were founders and machinists in Baltimore in 1878. None of these locomotives are known to have survived.

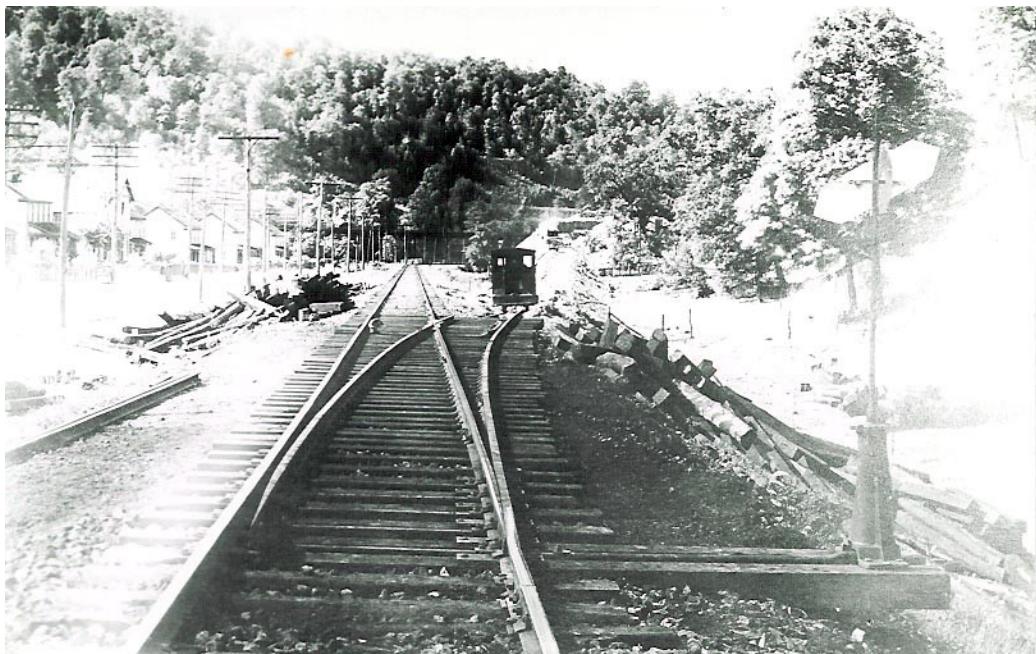


Roster of Motive Power of the Georges Creek Railroad					
Name	Type	Builder	Date	Notes	Disposition
A.H. Stump	2-6-0	S & P	1852		C&P No. 5, scrp 1875
Georges Creek	0-8-0	Baldwin	1853	Builder number 521	C&P No. 6, scrp 1876
Lonaconing	0-6-0	Baldwin	1853	Builder number 558	C&P No. 7, scrp 1874

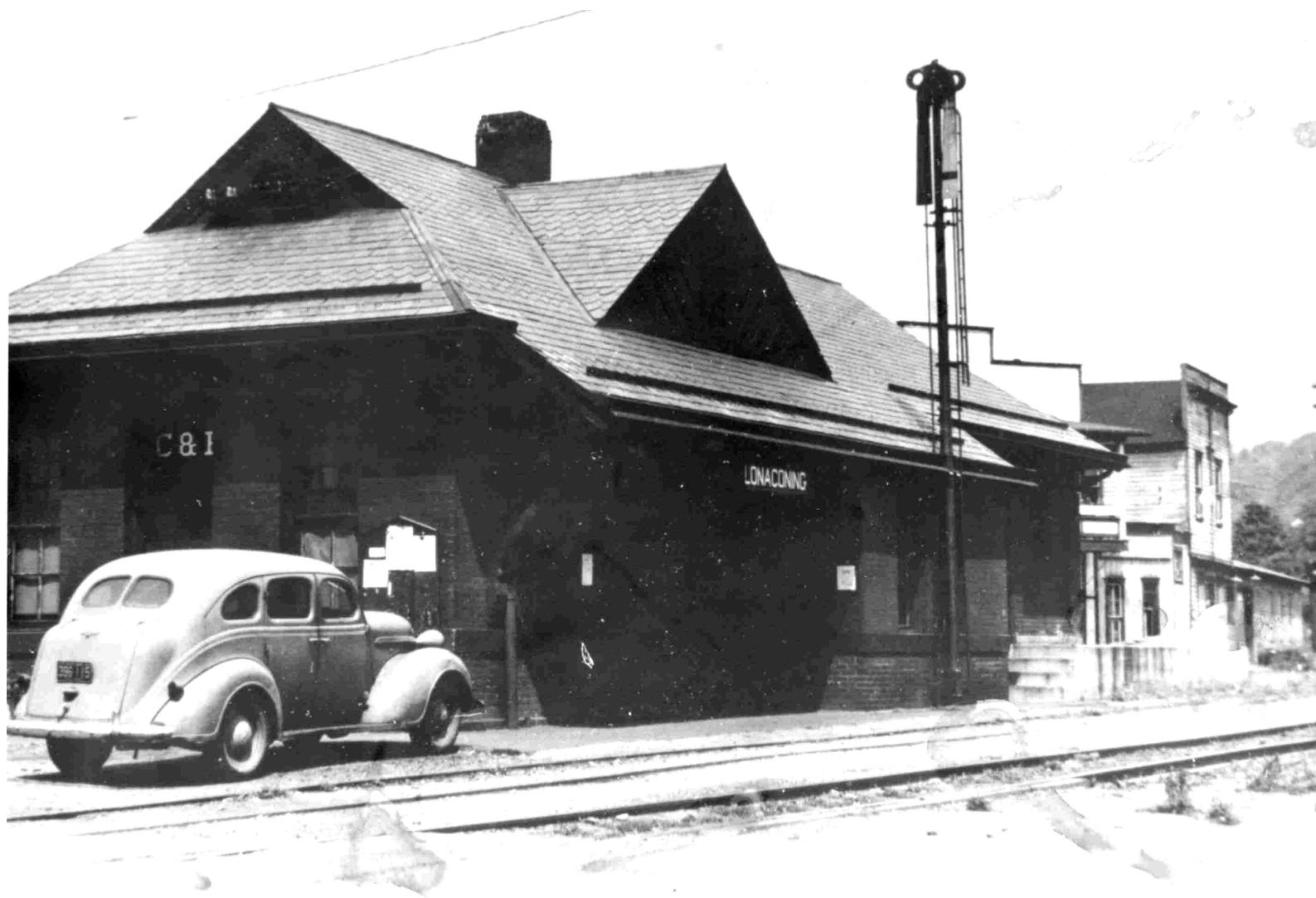
S&P stands for Smith & Perkins, locomotive manufacturers of Alexandria, VA.

## The Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad

Proceeding southward along Route 36 from Midland and paralleling the tracks, we come to Gilmore, where a large tannery was once located. Next we come to Lonaconing Junction, followed by Knapp's Meadow, where the GC&C line crossed over on a tall steel trestle. A C&P connection with the GC&C was at Jackson Junction. Driving down Route 36 from Midland to Lonaconing, the C&P line, on the right. The Georges Creek and Cumberland line was on the left. The GC&C bridge abutment crossing a creek to the right can still be seen. Near Jackson Junction, just past the grade crossing, was a section house where the GC&C and C&P intersected. The rail line now runs to the left of Route 36, to eastward.



At Water Cliff, before Lonaconing, there was a water tank of 25,000 gallons capacity, served by 'Water Station Run'. This was the location for the facilities of the George's Creek Rail Road. Present day Water Cliff Road branches off State Route 36, just before the exit for Dan's Mountain State Park. On the road to Dan's Mountain State Park, off Rt. 36 north of Lonaconing, the base of the water tank can be found. Lonaconing sported a passenger and a freight station, and several local industries including a bakery, brewery, and a glass works. The first industry served was the Iron Furnace, located in the City Park. Across Georges Creek are the rail lines, and the Silk Factory, Klott's Throwing Mill (1906-1957), abandoned, but frozen in time. It had its own siding, with raw silk coming in boxcars, and finished silk thread being shipped out to fabric mills in the area of Reading, Pennsylvania. A glass factory (circa 1920) stood across from the silk mill, but later burned, and no trace remains.



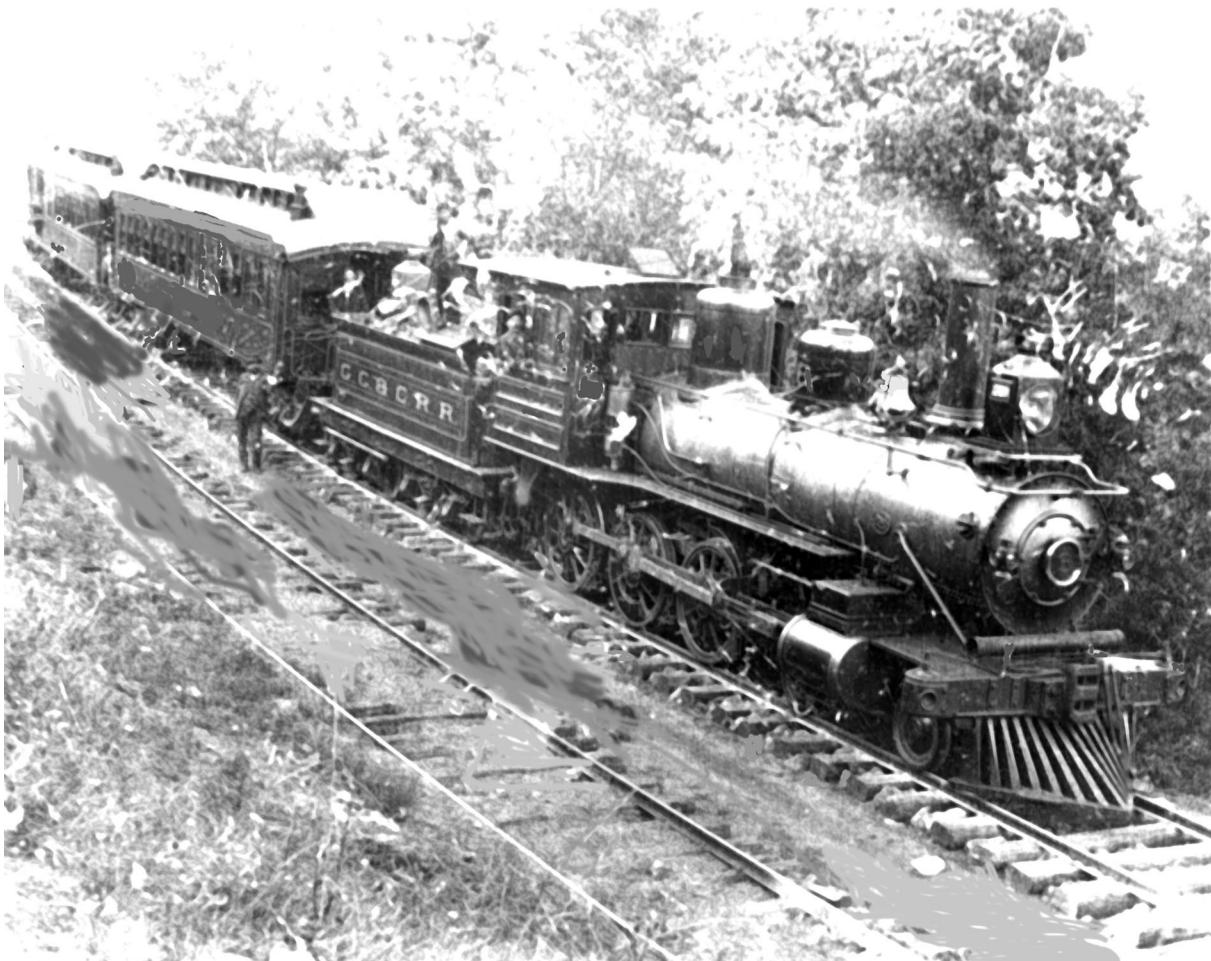
Beyond this point, the line had been built as part of the Georges Creek Coal & Iron's railroad. The railroad proceeds through a litany of small towns past 'Coney, Detmold, Pekin, Moscow, Dawson, Barton, Morrisons, Phoenix, Lauder, and Gannon. Then, Franklin and Westernport, on the Potomac River. A bridge carried the C&P over the river to Piedmont, WV, and a connection with the B&O Railroad.

## **The Georges Creek & Cumberland Railroad**

Besides the C&P and the trolley, the residents of the Georges Creek could opt for the Georges Creek and Cumberland Railroad passenger service. The depot was on Scotch Hill.

GC&C passenger stations were located at Cumberland, Vale Summit, Midland, and Lonaconing. The station at Lonaconing was located up the hill behind the iron furnace, and was reportedly inconvenient to reach. The right of way of the line is still evident in this area, but no rails remain. The GC&C used the Hay Street Station in Cumberland, and made a passenger stop at Mechanic Street.

The GC&C rostered a 4-6-0 passenger engine. The GC&C had several passenger cars, including an observation car with open sides. This car was popular for political outings and picnic excursions, but not in the winter.



The January 18, 1887 published schedule shows two trains per day from Cumberland to Lonaconing (except Sundays). If you took the 10:45 AM from Lonaconing, you could lunch in Cumberland before catching the 1:15 PM to New York over the Pennsylvania Railroad. This express service would arrive in New York at 7:10 AM the next day. There was checked baggage service on this line.

AND  
SHORT LINE PASSENGER TRAINS,  
DAILY, Sundays excepted.  
From HAYS STREET STATION, Cumberland.

OUTWARD-BOUND G. C. & C. R. R. TRAINS  
Leave Cumberland....7:15 a. m.; 1:30 p. m  
Arrive Vale Summit..8:00 a. m.; 2:15 p. m  
Arrive Lonaconing....8:30 a. m.; 2:45 p. m  
Pennsylvania Railroad trains leave at 8:20 a. m. and 1:15 p. m., for Bedford, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York.

RETURNING G. C. & C. R. R. TRAINS.  
Leave Lonaconing...10:45 a. m.; 5:00 p. m  
Arrive Vale Summit.11:15 a. m.; 5:30 p. m  
Arrive Cumberland..12:00 noon; 6:15 p. m  
Pennsylvania Railroad trains from Bedford, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York arrive at 12:15 and 9:05 p. m.

JAMES A. MILLHOLLAND,  
General Manager.

JANUARY 18, 1887.

The GC&C motive power all came from the Pittsburgh Locomotive and Car Works. Ten engines were rostered. There were nine engines of the 2-8-0 wheel arrangement, and a 4-6-0 passenger engine. All of the engines went to the Western Maryland, and all were reported scrapped between 1914 and 1917. For rolling stock, the GC&C rostered predominately coal hoppers; two hundred being listed for the year 1884. In addition, the 1884 Poor's lists two box cars, and 10 platform cars. The various ICC valuations list 24 GC&C cabooses for 1911 and 1912, and 20 for the year 1913. The GC&C also had several passenger cars, including an open-sided observation car.

### Lonaconing Freight customers on the C&P

Freight customers in Lonaconing included Jacob Click Feed and Flour, the Glass Company, and the Silk Mill. Apples were shipped by boxcar from Charlestown (Southeast of Lonaconing), at the Sloan Farm. This facility had its own siding.

## The Silk Mill

In 1907 George Klots of New York opened a silk throwing mill in Lonaconing, Maryland, to take advantage of the inexpensive labor and cheap coal available in this coal mining area. The operation depended heavily on the labor of women and young children, who could not be employed by the mining industry. Labor conditions improved through the years, and the mill continued productive until 1957, when synthetic fibers encroached on the traditional silk fabric market.

There were similar Klots Throwing mills in Scranton, Carbondale, Archibald, and Forrest City, PA and Fredericksburg, VA. There was also a Klots Mill in Cumberland on Gay Street. This still stands as a 60,000 square foot brick industrial building. It is reported that 14 mills were owned by the firm.

Beginning with a crew of mostly youngsters, some as young as seven, the mill became part of an American silk throwing dynasty with 14 mills, 6,000 workers, and \$50 million dollars in annual sales. In the 1930s, the company added rayon to its products. With the 1940s came wartime silk shortages and the rise of synthetic fibers. The dynasty collapsed several years before the last production run in 1957, when reelers, coners, and testers walked away from what was now General Textile Mill and never returned. The doors closed and time froze. This remains the only intact silk mill in the United States.



The raw silk came from the Orient to the West Coast of the United States via fast sailing ship, and was transferred to express trains for the journey east. This was a time-sensitive cargo, and the silk trains were given privilege even over passenger trains. The manufacture of silk was a multi-step process. Raw silk came from Italy, Spain, India, China and Japan. The fibers were reeled into skeins containing 1 to 2 ounces of silk each. The skeins were bundled into large bales of 200 pounds each. These bales were imported into the United States.

Raw silk was too coarse to be worked as it came from the bales, and it contained a natural

gum that had to be removed. Thus, the first step in the processing of silk was to wash it in large vats. Next, the silk was wrung out and allowed to dry. This process was known as “throwing.” From there, the silk went into the winding process. The skeins were opened, placed on an apparatus called a “swift” and attached to a spool. The silk was wound onto the spools. In some cases, depending upon its intended use, the thread had to be doubled. If so, two or more threads were united on one spool. The spools, or bobbins, of silk were then twisted, reeled and made into new skeins that were taken to be dyed.

The mill was run by steam, with an extensive arrangement of overhead line shafts to drive the mills by leather belts. The throwing mill produced silk thread from the raw silk, which was then wound on bobbins. This product was in turn shipped, mostly by rail, to weaving plants near Reading, Pennsylvania to make cloth, ribbon, and finished products. The silk mill had its own rail siding off of the C&P line.

### **The Glass Plant**

Between the Silk Mill and the railroad tracks, a glass factory was built in 1914 by Thomas and Alfred Dugan. The Dugan glass company was operating by November, and sent two tableware patterns to the Pittsburgh Glass Exhibit in December. Evidence for a ad in China, Glass & Lamps magazine for February of 1915 shows a series of products being made by the works.

However, in March of 1915, the Dugans quit the business. Alfred went to a glass company in Indiana that the brother had started some years before. Thomas went to the Hocking Glass Company in Ohio. The local company became known as the Lonaconing Glass Company, and changed its product line from pressed to blown glass. A wartime shortage of natural gas caused a closing of the plant in 1918. The plant opened again in 1920 as the Utility Glass Company, making federally mandated non-glare headlight lens for automobile lights. They also produced some pressed and blown glass, and did acid etching.

The factory closed again in 1929, but was reopened by The Sloan Brothers (Alexander and Dixon) as The Sloan Glass Company. The brothers had lost their Potomac Glass Company (Cumberland) to a fire. Bad luck followed them, as the Lonaconing plant burned on March 6, 1932.

### **The Steamer *Georges Creek***

The Parker Vein Coal Company operated a series of steamships, including the *Georges Creek*. These were sold at public auction in November 1854 in New York City to Mr. A. C. Hall. The *Georges Creek*, a 448 ton vessel, had been built in Philadelphia in 1853. It went for \$14,000.

## The Detmold Riflemen

A local military outfit, the *Detmold Riflemen* served the Union cause in the Civil War. This group was reorganized as Company A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Maryland Infantry, Potomac Home Brigade (of Allegany County). In October 1861 when Allegany County's quota for enlistment was 872 men, 1473 volunteered. At least 7 men served the Confederate cause.

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The Lewis J. Ort Library of Frostburg University also has extensive holding related to local history, including microfilm of newspapers. A research search by the author on the topic, "Georges Creek" returned 475 citations. In addition, the library has an extensive collection of maps of coal mines.

The Western Maryland Historical Library, [www.whilbr.org](http://www.whilbr.org), is another good resource.

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